In focus this month:

Physical Activity

1. If physical activity was a drug, it would be the most cost effective available on the NHS, and yet so many people reach for the tablets before their training. Taking the recommended amount of physical activity each week can lower your risk of having a stroke or developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some forms of cancer by up to 50%, and can reduce your risk of dying early by 30%. If you’re not active at the moment, an increase of just 30 minutes a week is a good place to start. If you’re already active, click here to see if you’re hitting the recommended types and amounts.

2. This month we’re talking about getting active, but what’s your motivation? Lots of people hit the gym to shed pounds. Whilst burning off that extra donut-at-your-desk isn’t a bad idea, pining all your hopes for the body beautiful on your bi-weekly Crossfit class will leave you disappointed if you don’t eat right. To burn off one bottle of Pepsi and a Snickers you’d have to do 400 sit ups and 250 push ups. If you regularly eat or drink more than your body needs, there won’t be enough hours in the day to burn it all off. Exercise for fun, for your mental health, to sociably, to feel fit, strong and vibrant. Exercising for weight loss? It may help a little, but you can’t outrun a bad diet.

3. The Chief Medical Officer tells us that we need to get active for around 30 minutes a day, but the activity needs to get you breathing a little faster and raise your pulse truly benefit from being your 10 thousand steps in but a mooch with your pooch, or a pitter patter round the park might not increase your fitness if the pace is too slow. Download the Active 10’s app from One You. With your phone in your bag or pocket, the handy app tracks your speed and movement, and will give you a daily report of how long you spent ‘in the zone’ when you were stepping. You can break up your time into short bursts of 10 minutes that fits with your routine.

4. It’s not just for the grown-ups. Getting active from an early age helps build stronger bones and muscles to carry them through to healthy adulthood. This summer Change 4 Life’s 10 minute shakes ups are back, and once again they’re all about the blockbusting film of the season. If your kids fancy themselves as Jedi Knights they can start by practicing their moves here. They’ll get to show them off at lots of our child and family friendly events over the summer.

5. Staying active at all ages is the important for a happier, healthier and longer life. Whilst it might be tempting to sit back and chill when retirement rolls around, it’s important to keep moving. Being physically active as you age keeps you mobile and independent, and means you can enjoy the free time you’ve worked all your life to get to. It can also become a big part of your social network as you say goodbye to work colleagues. There are lots of suitable activities for older people in Tameside. Walking Football, Tai Chi, Curling, Line Dancing, the list goes on. If you’ve never tried it before, Nordic Walking is new to Tameside and is a great way to get moving and stay social. Book a free taster session here.

6. Not having the time to get to the gym is a reason people often give for not being active. Can’t get to the gym? Why wait to get to a fitness factory when the world is on your doorstep? Ditching the car for other modes of transport can help you build physical activity into your daily routine and leave the traffic jams behind at the same time. Walking, cycling, or even parking and riding part of the way could all help you achieve your 30 minutes of active time each day, and could help you arrive at your destination feeling great. If you want to know more about the benefits of active travel, or want some practical tips on how to get started, look here.

7. People with a disability or long term health condition are less likely to take up physical activity than the rest of the population, and yet the benefits are every bit as important, perhaps even more so for some. If you’re living with a disability or health condition in Tameside, and you want to get active, you don’t have to go it alone. With the Live Active and Everybody Can schemes, Active Tameside and a team of specialist trained staff is there to coach and support you every step of the way, through a great range of fun and friendly activities. Click on the logos to see more.

8. Physical and mental health go hand in hand, in fact you can’t have one without the other. Getting active can be a real mood booster and can help with mental health conditions like stress, anxiety and depression by calming a busy mind. If you are living with a mental health condition you might find getting motivated more difficult than others, so it’s important to start off small. Here are 5 tips to help you get moving and start feeling the benefits of mindfulness that physical activity brings with it.

9. Women and girls under the age of 44 are less likely to be active than the rest of the population. Research from One You tells us that a big reason many women miss out on health is because they’re busy looking after everyone else in the family and often put themselves as the last priority. Whether it’s to build confidence and self-esteem, feel younger and stronger, or just to get some time for you, the best way to be on top form for your family, is to look after number one by getting active. If you want to feel inspired see how these sisters are doing it for themselves.

10. Every year, over 1000 people in Tameside and Glossop are told they have cancer. It’s the news that nobody wants to hear. Being physically active can help protect you against certain types of cancer like breast, womb and bowel, by helping regulate the hormones that flow round your body. For those who already have a cancer diagnosis, physical activity can help with recovery, and in some cases can reduce the risk of cancer recurring. Tameside now has its very own Macmillan unit, offering support to people with cancer and those who are affected by it. Have a look at their advice on how keeping moving can help with body, mind and emotion when living with cancer.

11. We always like to mention that quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do to improve your health, but what has that really got to do with physical activity? Studies have shown that short bouts of physical activity can help reduce the urge to smoke, and give you something to focus on to fight the cravings when they hit. It also helps curb the appetite and limit the weight gain some people experience when cutting out cigarettes. If you want to quit, Be Well is on hand to give you 1-2-1 support. Call 0161 716 2000 for advice or visit smokefree to learn more about fighting cravings with exercise.

12. A study by Pride Sports found that LGBT people were less likely to participate in physical activity than the general population. In part due to homophobia, homophobic language can be dismissed as ‘banter’ and can make for an unpleasant environment that some LGBT people choose to avoid. For those who do participate, over 70% of younger people (under 22) are not open about their sexuality. There’s so much to be done to make the world of physical activity inclusive for all LGBT people. Click here to learn more.

A Picture of Health is produced by Tameside’s Population Health Team. We’re here to research and understand the big health matters that affect our borough. Our goal is to find ways to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the people living here, to give them happier, healthier and longer lives. But enough about us. You are the most important person in your health, so read on to see what you can do for yourself and your family to stay fit and well.

For more information visit www.tameside.gov.uk/health, email publichealth.enquiries@tameside.gov.uk or visit facebook Healthy Tameside